

NEWS RELEASE

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Dine College's WR Center Debut's 'Gardening Day'

Official Says Healthier Lifestyles Is Key

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Annie Yazzie was on her lunch hour, but health and spiritual well-being were on her mind.

The tribal government worker just happened to be wearing the "work pants" that she puts on when gardening around her home in Chinle. As Yazzie passed by the Window Rock Center's new garden, she got excited.

"I was walking by and saw that they were obviously getting ready to do planting," Yazzie said. "That's something I'm interested in all the time especially during the summer."

Yazzie, 44, was referring to the first-ever Gardening Day at the Window Rock Center on May 18. The event initially began in March and is technically referred to as "lina baa chaa'nahasin," in Navajo which means to honor life by taking care of oneself and maintaining good health.

Amberia Tolino, an office coordinator at the Window Rock Center, said Gardening Day is part of a series of health events happening at the Window Rock campus. She said the series began with traditional foods as the focus, but branched out to include ways to live a healthy lifestyle. The seeds planted are of red, green, blue and white corn.

"The (Gardening Day) was implemented into the series with the focus of sustaining life through the growing of food," Tolino explained. "Re-connecting with Mother Earth and taking what is being offered from the ground is a blessing in the form of food and maintaining a healthy lifestyle."

Tolino said just five people came out on the opening for Gardening Day, a mix of students, staffers and members of the community, she said.

Tolino said the purpose of Gardening Day is to bring self-awareness to the Navajo way of life. The relatively small patch of fenced in gardening land is northwest of the Window Rock Center and in plain sight of people who frequent (Navajo Nation) government offices.

“There are numerous problems that we face and the most important issue that needs attention is how we take care of ourselves and the Earth, while keeping in mind our heritage and culture.

Tolino said the center plans to use the harvested corn at the 50th anniversary celebration on Sept. 14. Diné College began in 1968 as the first tribally-controlled institution of higher learning in the U.S.